

Action Plan

In Section 10

Tool 17: Evaluation Tips



The Vision

Collaboration partners have a clear and consistent understanding of the project vision and goals. They also know what strategies they plan to implement to reach these goals, which partners are responsible for specific tasks and when they should be completed, what resources will be needed and how they will be acquired, and how the partnership activities/projects will be evaluated.

Action Plan

Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.

—Japanese proverb



Action Steps to Success

The final element of successful collaborations is the action plan. The partnership may have a shared vision, necessary expertise, open communication, teamwork, motivators in place to encourage recruitment and sustain involvement of partners, and the means to accomplish their goals. Without an action plan, however, the collaboration will have unfocused achievements and will not accomplish desired objectives.

The action plan is the mechanism by which the shared vision is operationalized. It is a working document that is designed to guide the collaboration. The action plan describes strategies to meet specific objectives of the problem-solving project or other community policing initiative, and the action plan delineates the steps to bring about the envisioned change. The action plan specifies **WHAT** will be done, by **WHOM**, and **WHEN**. The plan also describes **HOW** the partnership will know

if actions taken achieve desired outcomes. For each objective of the effort, the action plan should describe:

- What specific activity/task should occur.
- Who will be responsible for the task.
- The timeframe for accomplishing the task/when the action will take place.
- What resources will be needed to accomplish the task and how those resources will be acquired.
- Who will know when the task is completed.
- How the effectiveness of the strategy will be assessed.

This toolkit intentionally does not include a sample action plan form that can be duplicated. Too often, when such a form is provided, partners struggle to fit information into every section of the form, rather than design a method/form that captures information relevant to their action plan. Because each collaboration is unique, each action plan is unique as well.

Step 1

Convene a Meeting (or Series of Meetings) to Make Team Decisions Regarding the Action Plan.

At the meeting, the partners should designate a notetaker who will record team decisions. The team should agree on:

- The vision statement developed during the visioning meeting.
- Goals for achieving the vision statement.
- Specific strategies to accomplish those goals.
- Who is responsible for each task and the timeline associated with the task.
- Who will be notified when a task has been completed.
- What resources are needed to complete the task.
- Sources of funding and support (e.g., in-kind contributions, volunteer resources, etc).
- Who will seek, collect, compile, and oversee the resources.
- How the project will be evaluated.

Step 2

Write Down and Distribute the Plan for Partners' Review.

Include the essential elements of an action plan as you design a plan that is owned by and useful to your initiative. A complete action plan will contain the following elements:

- **Cover Page:** Include the name of the collaboration, list the partners, and specify the timeframe allotted for completion of the project.
- **Acknowledgments:** List other stakeholders that have made contributions to the effort.
- **Vision Statement:** Present the vision statement (developed by the partners and stakeholders) on the first page of the action plan. Printing the vision statement at the beginning of the action plan serves as a reminder to the team that the goals and strategies must lead to the shared vision.
- **Goals:** Present clear goal statements with measurable outcomes. If you want to change behavior, ask, "What is the desired increase or decrease in the behavior you are seeking to change?" For each goal, develop a separate plan that delineates the strategies you choose to accomplish each goal.
- **Strategies:** Describe the steps you are going to take to accomplish the collaboration's goals. Strategies give overall direction and advance the team's goals and vision.

- **Responsibility Chart:** List who (individual or group) is responsible for each strategy (or part of a strategy). A responsibility chart also specifies timeframes for completing tasks and who will be notified when the task is completed.
- **Resource Allocation:** Note what resources (people, time, or funds) are necessary to complete each task. Completing this step in the action plan provides the team with information necessary to budget resources, seek more resources for the project, or rethink the scope and breadth of the goals.
- **Assessment:** Develop a plan to evaluate both the process and the outcome of the strategies. Assessment addresses the questions, “Are we doing what we said we would do?” and “Are we accomplishing the intended results?” Assess the process used to address the strategies. Compare the outcomes with stated goals (see Tool 17: Evaluation Tips).

Once the plan is written, distribute it to all partners for review, comment, and revision, as needed.

Step 3

Incorporate Any Changes That Partners Recommend and Agree On.

Be certain to disseminate a final working copy of the action plan to all partners. Make certain that partners realize that this is a working document that can (and should) be continually revised by the collaboration as the project evolves. Partners should proactively and periodically review the plan for necessary modifications to ensure that proposed action steps are consistent with desired outcomes.

Step 4

Use the Action Plan.

An action plan is necessary to guide the team. Refer to the action plan on a regular basis as a reminder of the collaboration’s vision and goals and to check progress against the timeline, hold partners accountable to tasks, make certain that resources needed for tasks are available, and to plan future meetings or activities. Utilizing the action plan strengthens the collaboration. Without an action plan, there will be a lack of focus.

Example 12 Outcome Measures

If the issue being addressed is theft from vehicles in the student parking lot, some outcome measures may include:

- A reduction in the number of reported thefts from vehicles in the student parking lot.
- A reduction in the monetary loss to victims associated with thefts from vehicles in the student parking lot.
- An increased awareness among students who use the student parking lot of target hardening measures (e.g., locking the doors, not leaving purses or bags in plain view, removing face plates for car stereo systems, parking in high visibility areas, vehicle alarm systems).



Avoiding the Pitfalls

When developing and implementing the action plan for the community policing collaboration, try to avoid the following pitfalls. Consider implementing some of the suggested strategies if you have already encountered these challenges. Also, to help diagnose a struggling partnership, please refer to Section 1, Tool 1: Unsticking Stuck Groups/Reassessing the Collaboration, in particular items 33–36, to assess your action plan.

Pitfall:

Tasks are not completed or become delayed. If partners do not know who is assigned to various tasks or what comes next, tasks will not be implemented. Also, if partners do not hold one another accountable for completing tasks on time, other personal and professional priorities may take precedence, causing the project to be delayed.

Solutions:

Begin each meeting by reviewing tasks that were to be completed since the previous meeting. End each meeting with “next

steps” and make sure everyone knows who will be performing those tasks, and when the tasks must be completed.

If a partner consistently fails to complete tasks or complete tasks on time, one of the core partners should speak privately with that partner to determine issues and brainstorm on short- or long-term solutions.

Pitfall:

Partners are skeptical about project evaluation. When partners do not understand that one important purpose of project evaluation is to be able to know when goals are met and demonstrate that success to others (e.g., supervisors, community members, constituency, or potential funding agencies), they may be skeptical or view project evaluation negatively.

Solution:

As part of the action plan, partners should jointly develop measurable goals and agree to an evaluation strategy. All team members should review Tool 17: Evaluation Tips to better understand why evaluation is important and to dispel fears about evaluation.



Tools to Plan and Chart Your Progress

Tool 17

Evaluation Tips

- Set measurable, realistic goals before beginning the project. These goals should be outcome-oriented and directly linked to the project vision (see Example 12). Partners should jointly determine the measures, which should be multifaceted and take into consideration the information needs of the team, as well as individual members.
- In addition to establishing these measures, determine how the information will be collected and analyzed. Some factors to consider include:
 - ◆ How long after implementing the strategy do you expect to see results? Is that consistent with the timeline(s) of the partnership or members' needs for the outcome information?
 - ◆ What is the population and unit of analysis?
 - ◆ Do you have access to (or will you be able to obtain access to) the information required?
 - ◆ What confidentiality issues must be addressed when collecting the data? What types of protections can be put into place, particularly for individual-level data for which names or identifying information are linked? How will the data be stored and for how long?
- ◆ What is the level of resources required to collect the information? Is that a reasonable and available cost, given the benefit of capturing the particular measure?
- ◆ Who can assist with data collection efforts (e.g., partners, including students; local researchers; etc.)? Who has the necessary expertise to guide the evaluation?
- Collect baseline information before beginning the project. These data can then be compared with outcome data at the conclusion of the project.
- Capture process measures so that if outcome measures do not show an improvement in the issue or problem, you can revisit the steps taken to achieve the vision and determine what may have gone wrong.
- Consider with whom, when, how, and whether the evaluation findings will be shared. Measures collected throughout the project may also be used to redirect project activities, if needed.

